

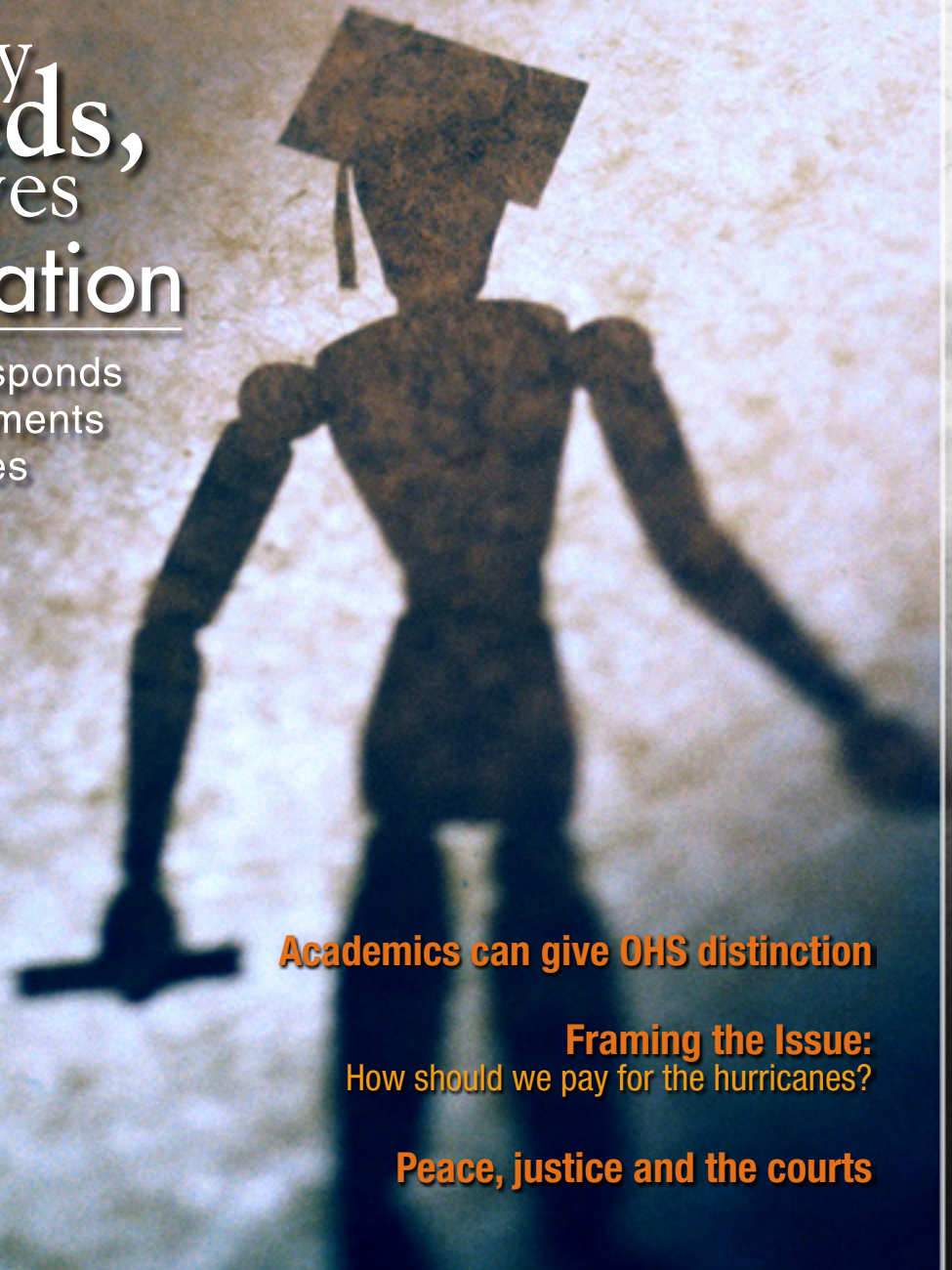
PUBLIC LIFE

November 2005 – Volume 2, Issue 6
Owensboro, Kentucky

Advocate

Community **needs,** **more** deserves higher **education**

Author of study responds
to questions, comments
and challenges



Academics can give OHS distinction

Framing the Issue:
How should we pay for the hurricanes?

Peace, justice and the courts

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Rodney is president of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro. He joined the foundation in 2000 following twelve years with RiverPark (performing arts) Center. His volunteer and civic experience includes work in education, health care, youth, social services, tourism, and community development. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University.



Dave Boeyink

Dave is Associate Professor of Journalism and Director of Media Studies, Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, Indiana University. He holds a B.A. degree from Central College and an M.T.S. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. From 1978-87, he was Editorial Page Editor for the *Messenger-Inquirer*. He has published articles in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *Newspaper Journal*, and *Journalism Quarterly*.



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Fran works as a writer, editor, and communications consultant. She is a former reporter with the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and was a frequent panelist on Kentucky Educational Television's "Comment on Kentucky." Her clients include the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, University of Kentucky Center for Rural Health, and the Kentucky League of Cities.



John S. Hager

John established the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro in 1996 following the sale of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer* to the Belo Corporation (Dallas, TX). A graduate of Princeton University and the University of Michigan College of Law, he was a practicing attorney for 19 years prior to returning to the family newspaper in 1973. He has been involved in numerous civic initiatives, including a lead role in the establishment of the Owensboro Community College. In 1996, the Kentucky Press Association honored him with its "most valuable member" award. He was named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame in 2002.



Ed Staats

Ed served The Associated Press for 41 years, as a reporter, editor and administrator in 10 AP offices, including the AP's headquarters in New York. He retired in mid-2002 ending a career that bridged the print, broadcast, cable, and online news businesses. At his retirement, he was in charge of AP's Kentucky operations, a position he had held since the mid-1980's. He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

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*By William Chance, Ph.D.
Northwest Education
Research Center*

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We shared these reactions with the researcher and author of the study and allowed him an opportunity to clarify points, findings, recommendations, and to respond to those who say "it can't be done."

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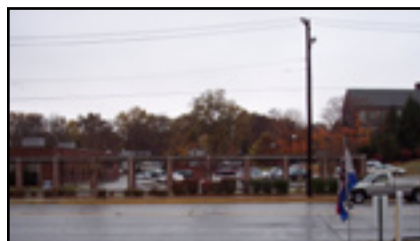


by Rodney Berry

As an alum and parent of two sons who benefited from Owensboro High School cross country, track, music and theater programs, my innate impulse is to heartily endorse the ambitious athletic and fine arts building plan for the OHS campus and its Shifley Park satellite recently authorized by the Owensboro Board of Education.

On closer scrutiny, however, the proposal raises questions that warrant public dialogue.

Proposed projects



A new OHS basketball gymnasium is planned for property between the high school and the former Longfellow School.

At OHS, preliminary plans call for a sparkling new gymnasium, artificial turf on the Rash Stadium football field, 500 parking spaces, and more accommodating facilities for its band, orchestra, theater, chorus, and visual arts programs. The \$13 million project will absorb most of the city school system's bonding capacity.

A few miles away, the board leased Shifley Park from the Owensboro city government and proceeded to spend nearly \$600,000 from its general fund to purchase contiguous property. The baseball facility was improved, an artificial turf soccer field and parking lot were constructed, and tennis courts and a girls' softball field are planned. These projects may push the Shifley Park expenses to \$2.5 million dollars – all of which will be funded through resources otherwise available for the classroom.

Rationale in supporting the projects

The strong correlation between extra curricular activities and student graduation rates helps build the case for these projects. Better facilities could entice more students into these programs, enhance experiences, and boost the image of a school that routinely battles negative (and unwarranted) connotations assigned to it.

Moreover, credible research increasingly links arts education to learning and improved test scores in other academic subjects. Arts classes are not fluffy electives, and the impressive OHS program warrants a brighter spotlight.

Some would say that the OHS athletic legacy deserves a turn, an infusion of funds, and its first on-campus gymnasium. Sports can build character, an immeasurable lifetime benefit. An impressive new facility could boost student morale and would finally accommodate an assembly of the entire student body.

Questions and concerns

On the other hand, considering the project costs, one need not be apologetic to ask if this is the wisest use of these funds. Is this aggressive building program long overdue in the city schools or does it represent misplaced priorities? Are parents, school councils, PTO volunteers, booster groups, or any of us who have an investment in public education concerned about these school board initiatives?

■ Should we be concerned about the ramifications of diluting the school system's general fund by \$2.5 million dollars to enhance its athletic program? What happens when that amount of money is not available for classroom instruction or learning materials? Surely the shortfall trickles down in some fashion to affect the teacher or student.

■ Should we be concerned that the proposed construction and expansion at OHS will absorb most of the bonding capacity of a system that has not built a new school in 40 years? How long will this OHS project delay other important school construction or maintenance projects?

■ Should we be concerned that building a new on-campus gymnasium is a priority when city and county governments are considering a new downtown arena that will need tenants?

■ Should we be concerned about the marketability of the city system's only high school? Students with an interest in the arts may be attracted to improved OHS programs and facilities, and some athletes may be drawn to a school with impressive sports venues. Nonetheless, this will not coun-

Contributors

William Chance, Ph.D.



William Chance is Executive Officer of the Northwest Educational Research Center based in Olympia, Washington.

A research consultant with experience in most major aspects of education policy and program analysis, Chance has worked with all types of education sectors, public and private, two-year and four-year, academic and vocational, K-12 through higher education. Present specializations center on institution role and mission refinements and alternative organization and program delivery systems.

He is former Executive Director of a blue ribbon higher education study commission in Washington and a former Deputy and Interim Executive Director of Washington's Council on Postsecondary Education. He also is a former member of the research faculty of the University of Washington, a past "Scholar in Residence" to the Western Governors' Association, and author of the book entitled "...The Best of Educations," which was prepared under the auspices of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Chance has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Ohio State University.

Chad Gesser



"Changing our local environment to promote health and healthy lifestyles is one aspect of community economic development that our local leadership must achieve. Improving the health of our community is key to community development, yet sometimes appears low on the community development agenda. A healthy workforce is a productive and educated workforce," says Chad Gesser, Coordinator for Institutional Research at Owensboro Community and Technical College.

Chad has provided data analysis on various health issues in our community for the past five years. He currently leads Project Healthy Owensboro: Progress and Evaluation (H.O.P.E.), serves on the Lifestyle Summit Steering Committee, and is a board member of Citizen Health Care Advocates.

Jay Wethington



Jay Wethington has served as Commonwealth Attorney for Owensboro's sixth judicial circuit for 10 years. For the previous 10 years, he practiced law with the firm of Connor, Neal, and Stevenson.

He is a graduate of the Salmon P. Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University. He earned a baccalaureate degree from Western Kentucky University and studied at the University Paul Valery in Montpellier, France and The Hague Academy of International Law in the Netherlands.

Wethington was named Kentucky's Prosecutor of the Year in 2002 by the Commonwealth's Attorney General and the Kentucky Commonwealth Attorney Association's President's Award in 2004.

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ter the sprawling growth of county schools. Nearly all the new subdivisions are built in the county district, and Realtors and homebuilders work into their sales pitch that the county schools have higher academic rankings, ACT scores, and on-to college rates – and 30 percent lower school taxes.

Academic options

Did the city school board explore all the options? Rather than athletics, what if its focus had been on academics? Imagine what \$2.5 million dollars (or many millions of dollars) spent on academic initiatives or learning resources could do to boost student success and bring distinction to OHS.

For example, what if the city school board embraced a 10-year goal of making OHS Kentucky's top science high school? Rather than use bond funds for new sports facilities and artificial turf, they could invest in a planetarium, observatory and telescope, or a lecture hall with distance learning connections to prominent scientists and mathematicians. (OHS improved its science laboratories recently.) A task force of local scientists, engineers, and information technology specialists could advise the board on such an initiative.

Intern programs could be developed in conjunction with local research occurring at Large Scale Biology, Mitchell Cancer Center and PediaResearch. We would see mentoring programs, summer institutes, and more science scholarships. Word would get out. National academies of science and charitable foundations would be interested in collaborating. OHS could become the school of choice for students with a keen interest in science, including many foreign students.

Of course, science is just one dimension of what it will take to prepare students for the jobs of the future.

High school seniors from 21 other countries currently test above U.S. seniors in math and science. In the global economy, students will need to be proficient in technology, mathematics, foreign languages, and more. They will need to be lifelong, adaptable learners.

A question of priorities

Unfortunately, school boards are subject to restrictive formulas on the use of state and federal funds for construction, equipment and programs. But the city school board is also using general fund dollars on this largely athletic investment, diluting classroom resources. And



The new OHS soccer field at Shifley Park features artificial turf.

Is this aggressive building program long overdue in the city schools or does it represent misplaced priorities?



The cost of Shifley Park property and athletic facilities may reduce the city school system's general fund by \$2.5 million.

because the athletic plan is so ambitious, even when academic projects qualify for bond funds, there will be little if anything left in that kitty, perhaps for many years.

There is rationale for building these sports facilities, but it pales in comparison to the impact of a comparable investment in academics. OHS athletics may be near and dear to our hearts, but our heads tell us that students will be better prepared for life through a stronger grounding in academics.

In 2003, the city school board reacted indifferently to a study commissioned by the Citizens Committee on Education that pointed to disturbing school financial and population trends due to a landlocked city school district. The board acknowledged that a study to examine the advantages and disadvantages of a consolidated school system would be helpful, but it declined to participate because of the cost. Just two years later, the board finds millions of dollars to spend on athletics.

City-County favoritism

There is already speculation that this OHS campus and Shifley Park capital spending spree is a "last hurrah" by the city school board to do something impressive and dramatic for their only high school while they have a chance, since once the city and county schools merge – which some think is inevitable and right around the corner – county school officials will favor their own schools over those schools inherited from the city.

If merger is inevitable, our community would be well-served if lingering city-county rivalries and tensions were minimized. Some county officials have already grumbled about how a merged system would be saddled with the debt from this OHS expansion.

Refocus on our goal, consider all the options

Perhaps it is time to challenge the dominance of athletics in this major capital investment. Let's engage the citizenry in dialogue about a community vision for our high schools. What characterizes America's best high schools? How can we apply our resources toward that end?

Let's make sure we examine all the options, stress learning and achievement, and bring the most useful distinction and lasting benefit to OHS and its students. ■



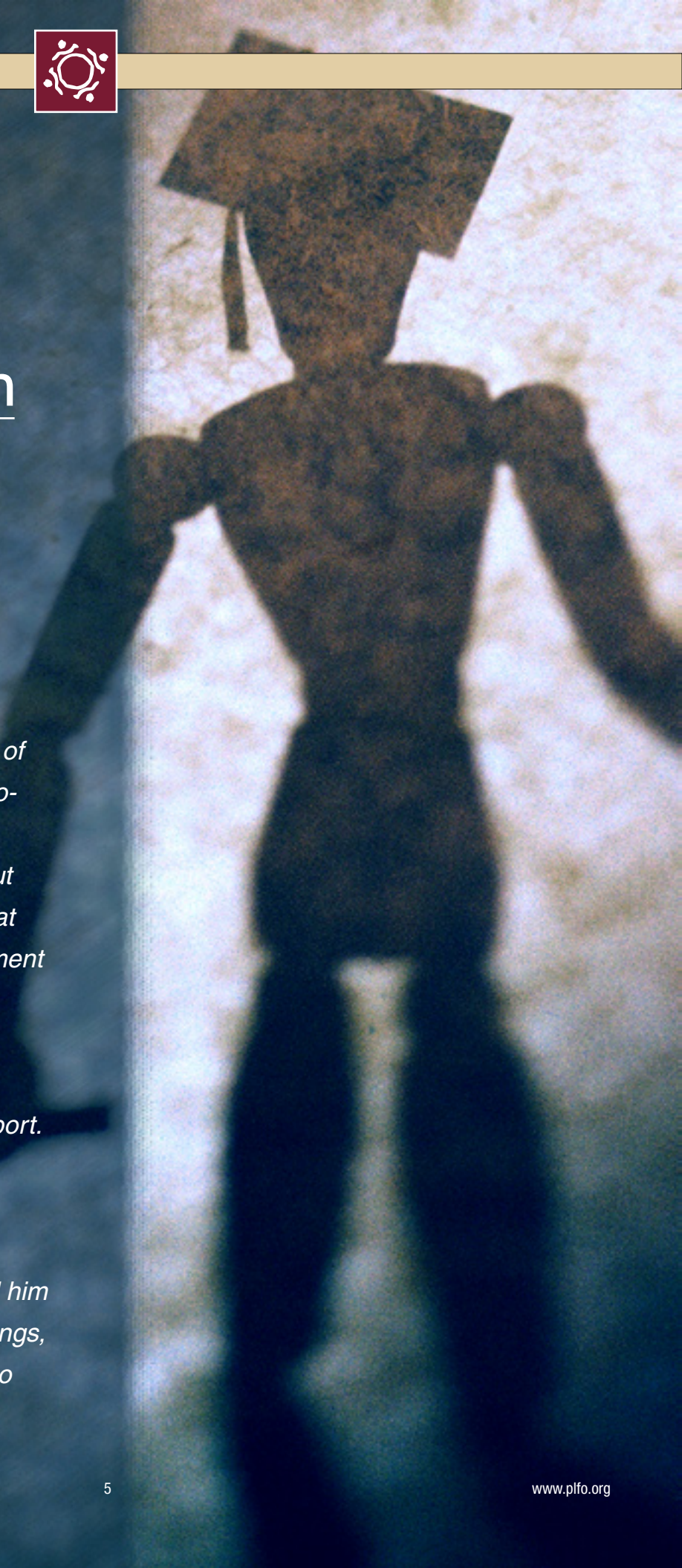
Community **needs,** **more** deserves higher **education**

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*By William Chance, Ph.D.
Northwest Education Research Center*

Editor's Note: The Sept. 21 release of sobering statistics about Owensboro-Daviess County's low educational attainment struck a nerve throughout the community. Despite research that documents how economic development is tied to the education level of the workforce, some local educators and community leaders responded defensively or indifferently to the report.

We shared these reactions with the researcher and author of the study, William Chance, Ph.D., and allowed him an opportunity to clarify points, findings, recommendations, and to respond to those who say "it can't be done."



Community needs, deserves more higher education

Charting a New Course: Higher Education in Owensboro and Daviess County, Ky.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Interviews with presidents, senior management, faculty, trustees and students of local colleges and universities

Large and small group meetings on campuses

Meetings and telephone conversations with local officials and state legislators

Two surveys of local employers – major corporate and small firms

Survey of community residents

Three community forums

Report Summary

Key Findings

In terms of adults with baccalaureate degrees:

- Daviess County ranks 18th among Kentucky counties.
- Daviess County ranks below the state average.
- Daviess County ranks next to the bottom when compared with Kentucky's eight largest counties.
- Daviess County ranks last when compared to counties where a four-year public institution is located.

In terms of adults with graduate or professional degrees:

- Daviess County ranks below the state average.
- Daviess County ranks last among peer counties.
- Daviess County ranks last when compared to counties where a public four-year public institution is located.

In terms of adults enrolled in higher education:

- Daviess County ranks below the state average.
- Daviess County ranks next to last among peer counties.
- Daviess County's higher education institutions (Brescia University, Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro Community and Technical College, Western Kentucky University – Owensboro Extended Campus) offer degrees in less than six percent of the programs listed in the U.S. Department of Education higher education registry.
- Daviess County has the lowest net in-migration of Kentucky's eight most populous counties.

Daviess County's poor higher education rankings are even more disturbing when one considers that Kentucky consistently ranks among the lowest performing states in higher education.

Recommendations

- Designate a community higher education advocacy association to coordinate and direct a campaign to increase higher education participation and attainment levels.
- Adopt a community goal of reaching higher education participation and attainment rates comparable to those of Fayette County by 2020.
- Pursue contractual relationships with independent colleges and universities for enrollment spaces in programs that fit with the community's economic and higher education goals.
- Join forces with Western Kentucky University and other institutions to bring new programs in the technical, science, engineering, agriculture and health areas to Owensboro.
- Attract a full-fledged WKU branch campus over an extended campus.
- Create a community Higher Education Center in which interested local institutions may offer courses and share facilities cooperatively.

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Responding to Feedback

Participants at various meetings connected with the release of the report posed questions, shared impressions, and added comments, such as the following:

"The problem is a lack of jobs, not educational opportunities."

"The colleges here already do a great job educating students. The problem is that there are no jobs here when they graduate. Our graduates don't have trouble getting jobs in other cities. The reason why our population has a low percentage of college graduates is that so many of our high school graduates want to leave Owensboro for their college experience and they never return because there are no jobs. Those that stay for college leave for the same reason."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Daviess County's unemployment rate is higher than all but one of the seven most populous counties in Kentucky, and 15 percent higher than the Warren County unemployment rate. Western Kentucky University is located in Warren County. There is a connection.

"Job growth and economic stimulation through comprehensive higher education services is a model that works in other places.

"Attracting business is highly competitive. The evidence is clear: Communities that have more higher education services have a competitive advantage."

"Which comes first: the feeder system or the jobs?"

"OCTC is investing in new programs, at a considerable risk, to link with emerging economic development possibilities – even though there is considerable doubt whether there will be any jobs. For example, the new associate program in biotechnology is a superb program, but Large Scale Biology is not hiring."

Dr. Chance responds:

"To meet the needs of the marketplace and compete globally, Kentucky will need many more people enrolled in and completing higher education programs than it has today. The question is: Will Owensboro-Daviess County provide more of those services or allow them to be provided elsewhere?

"We live in a learning society, and the public's thirst for further education is not going away."

"The benchmark cities that were used in the study have unfair advantages."

"We can't expect Owensboro-Daviess County to produce as many college graduates as cities like Bowling Green, Covington (Northern Kentucky), Lexington, Richmond, etc. that have universities in their backyard."

Dr. Chance responds:

"That's the point. Owensboro-Daviess County leaders will have to advocate effectively in order for your community to have advantages that characterize competitor communities.

"Peer counties were selected by population size, the best way to develop the most relevant comparisons. Statewide averages are helpful in showing comparisons with counties that are not listed specifically."

"Our culture does not value education."

"The people of Owensboro don't value education. Parents don't instill in their children the need to go onto college. This is due, in large part, to our rural traditions and the fact that many young people can earn more at a local factory than many others with a college degree. Some companies prefer to hire workers right out of high school and put them through their own training program. And some employers don't provide incentives. Why would someone go to a four-year nursing school when a two-year nursing graduate earns as much?"

Dr. Chance responds:

"I do not believe this, but Owensboro is not the first place I've heard it. One-third of young Americans do not advance to postsecondary education, and many in that group do not graduate.

"The prospect of immediate employment, even when not in a chosen career field, is an attractive lure, particularly for many young men. In some cases, often in technical training programs, students are hired out of the program before they complete it because demand for even partially trained employees is so great. Students also stop in and out.

"Affordability rather than culture is a more important reason. Cost and the need to work were reasons given for not going to college by the majority of non-college respondents to the Owensboro community

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survey. In a national study, about half of the respondents who did not go on to college said they could not afford it. Less than a quarter said they made this decision because they had enough of school.

"College attendance or non-attendance, especially by young male high school graduates, is becoming an issue of national concern. When I went to college, male students slightly outnumbered females. Now females outnumber males, and by a larger margin than when males prevailed.

"Young workers without degrees report that they are in their jobs by chance and do not view them as careers. These answers suggest lack of effective preparation, counseling, and, probably, parental guidance."

"Many students are not prepared for college."

"Too many students are not ready for college. They need remedial work. We should not lower our standards to attract or graduate more students. Brescia University official: Students tell us they don't want to come to Brescia because it's too hard. They would rather go to the community college. They're just looking for a piece of paper."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Opinions on preparedness vary by perspective. A report released a couple of years ago found only about 30 percent of college professors believed that a high school diploma was any guarantee that graduates had mastered the basics; conversely, about three-quarters of teachers and recent high school graduates felt that it was.

"According to the Kentucky Department of Education, Owensboro's high school graduates tend to achieve higher ACT scores and college grade point averages (GPAs) than residents of the rest of the state. There are some exceptions, but the numbers do not suggest a lack of preparedness. We also know that a lot of these students go on to colleges outside of the community. Owensboro/Daviess County residents constitute a large portion of WKU's student enrollment.

"Lack of preparedness does not seem any more of a scandal here than elsewhere, which is to say it may be a scandal of national proportion."

"There is not a market for much more than is being offered."

"The study concludes that we should offer more courses and degree programs. If there was a market for these programs, we (the local colleges) would already be offering them. Institutions cannot offer programs at a loss when there are not enough students to support them. The hospital offers full scholarships for nursing and a guaranteed job, and they still can't attract students."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Much depends on the definition of market. Recently a community college president in a remote section of New Mexico told me he believed that anything done in a high quality manner would attract students and jobs. His institution serves a four-county area with a 15-person per square mile population density, yet the state authorized it to offer bachelor's programs, starting with teacher education. I have no doubt there will be a market for these graduates, and for the graduates of other programs that follow.

"I wish I could feel sanguine that Owensboro institutions can respond with whatever courses and programs the market demands, but institutions can be entrenched by established programs and tenured faculty. They often must do new things on the margin and may not be able to respond with alacrity to emergent needs.

"Owensboro Community and Technical College offers a fairly wide range of certificate and associate programs, but the range and variety of programs at the bachelor's level in Owensboro are limited."

"We simply don't have what it takes to attract students from outside of our community."

"Even if our colleges work together more extensively, offer cross-registration, more courses, majors, and master's degrees, we will still not be in the position to offer the kind of major university experience that most students prefer. WKU-Owensboro and OCTC will not have dormitories, athletics, fraternities and sororities, etc. to be competitive."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Yes and no. I do not think it is an aspect of community appeal. Owensboro is a lovely city. Brescia, Kentucky Wesleyan, and OCTC attract students from outside the community. The problem is less a matter of attractive qualities than a need for greater variety and affordability, particularly for non-traditional students who have more difficulty qualifying for financial aid.

"Institutional culture also is important. Brescia and Kentucky Wesleyan are faith-based institutions, an essential fact for many who go there, but not for everyone.

"Choice is an important value, but currently Owensboro residents are limited in the range of choices available to them in public programs at baccalaureate and graduate levels."

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"Western gives lip service to Owensboro."

"Through the years, WKU has primarily provided an opportunity for teachers to take required graduate courses without leaving Owensboro. They offer little else, use mediocre local adjunct faculty, and – rather than bring in programs that are not available in Owensboro – they have duplicated courses and programs offered by Brescia and Wesleyan."

Dr. Chance responds:

"It is true that WKU-Owensboro offers only 12 of the 117 baccalaureate programs available in Bowling Green, and only seven of the 33 master's programs offered on the home campus.

"Some of this may relate to space. Adding space in Owensboro for WKU, establishing a full-fledged university branch, and creating a higher education center will lead to more programs not currently offered by any local institution. More stability, predictability, and variety will also attract tenure-track faculty."

"Western needs to move an entire program here."

"We don't need a few courses offered in Owensboro connected with a solid WKU program that is centered in Bowling Green; we need WKU to establish a center of distinction here – biotechnology, agricultural engineering, environmental science, nanotechnology etc. – programs that are tied to the jobs of tomorrow and entrepreneurialism."

Dr. Chance responds:

"The frustration is understandable. Most of the program fields associated with advancement in the global economy that are available on WKU's home campus are not available in Owensboro. Those include Agriculture, Natural Resources, Computer and Information Sciences, Engineering, Foreign Languages, Biology and Biomedical Sciences, Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and the Health Sciences."

"Why not just build on what we have?"

"We already have two fine four-year institutions. We should focus our energy and resources on helping Kentucky Wesleyan and Brescia grow and improve. With more local support and larger endowments, they could develop more majors, graduate programs and attract many more students – many of whom would naturally stay in Owensboro."

Dr. Chance responds:

"The report encourages this in its call for more cooperation and collaboration among the institutions serving the community. And people also should recognize that some of this is happening now, although it could be more visible. There is room for more collaboration, and there is support for this in the community, as long as it does not involve continuation of the status quo. The report's recommendation of a higher education center is in part intended as a call for a neutral and convenient place in which more of this can occur."

"We need to merge these good institutions into one great institution."

"If the trustees of each institution would embrace a goal of doing what is best for the community rather than what is best for the institution, they would find a way to do what needs to be done: merge the institutions, pool the resources, create a critical mass of students, work with a larger endowment, and design a competitive, appealing university."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Support for increased cooperation and collaboration may imply an interest in this, but there are limits. I do not think consolidation in a physical sense is very realistic for all of the obvious reasons – the two local four-year institutions are independently governed and they have deep religious roots and heritages.

"Consortia relationships in which each of the separate participants are truly committed to the success of the relationship can go part of the way. But in the end these are separate enterprises with separate cultures and values.

"They also are viable institutions. Sometimes when an independent college or university finds it necessary to close its doors, and this is not very often, the state will acquire it for public purposes, but Owensboro's institutions appear to be a long way from this.

"A more exciting future it seems is one in which Owensboro is home to several different types of institutions, with many educational flowers blooming, and many schools of thought contending."

Community needs, deserves more higher education

"We need real innovation through technology."

"We need to forget about Western and develop relationships with the Harvards, Yales, Stanfords, and MIT's through distance learning. Students here could have access to the best professors and brightest minds through technology."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Sometimes I think that much of the innovation people insist is occurring in higher education is more shadow than substance. I interpret the call for 'real' innovation as recognition of this. 'Technology' also is a very broad term. It now seems to be a synonym for Internet technology applied to instruction.

"The public is quite receptive to the idea of accentuating local programs with first-rate distance learning programs. The survey data show that people want more Internet activity, but – and this is important – they also want classroom experiences. Nearly 60 percent of survey respondents said they wanted a blend of the two forms.

"In some respects the argument may be academic. The majority of college students already employ a combination of the two. They are way out in front. This may be what is meant by real innovation, and it is happening now."

"We don't need a higher education center."

"We (the four local colleges) are already collaborating. Developing a higher education advocacy group is fine, but we don't need a center. We don't need another building to construct and maintain. That just dilutes resources that could be used more effectively in other ways."

Dr. Chance responds:

"Okay. This is something for people in the community to decide. The point is, the community needs a neutral ground on which collaboration and cooperation, cross-registration, course sharing, a common catalog, faculty collaboration, etc. can occur; more space in which to offer classes and try new things; and a stronger higher education focus and identity for the community. Perhaps most important, it would give people in Owensboro a more direct role in decisions about what is needed and what is to be provided there."

"We need control of our proportionate share of state funds."

"We need to fight for our proportionate share of state higher education dollars and then have control over how the funds are spent through a local board."

Dr. Chance responds:

"The operative term may be 'local control.' This is what much of the report is about. It calls for a more comprehensive range of public institution programs, a public institution branch, contracts with the two private institutions, and more direct involvement in program decisions, all of which relate to greater 'local control.'

"Participation rates and enrollments drive higher education budgets. As the recommended operations take form, as students enroll, and as more local operational autonomy is achieved, the funds will be both more 'proportionate' in the sense implied by the question, and more 'locally controlled.'

"I'll close with this: Owensboro is a wonderful place with great potential. Its story is not in the past. The challenges represented by the things called for in the study are daunting, but they can be accomplished with commitment and perseverance. The title of the report is 'Charting a New Course.' It is a new journey, and I believe it is one worth making. I hope others will feel likewise."

Charting a New Course: Higher Education in Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky
Commissioned by the Owensboro Citizens
Committee on Education

Summaries are available: 685-2652

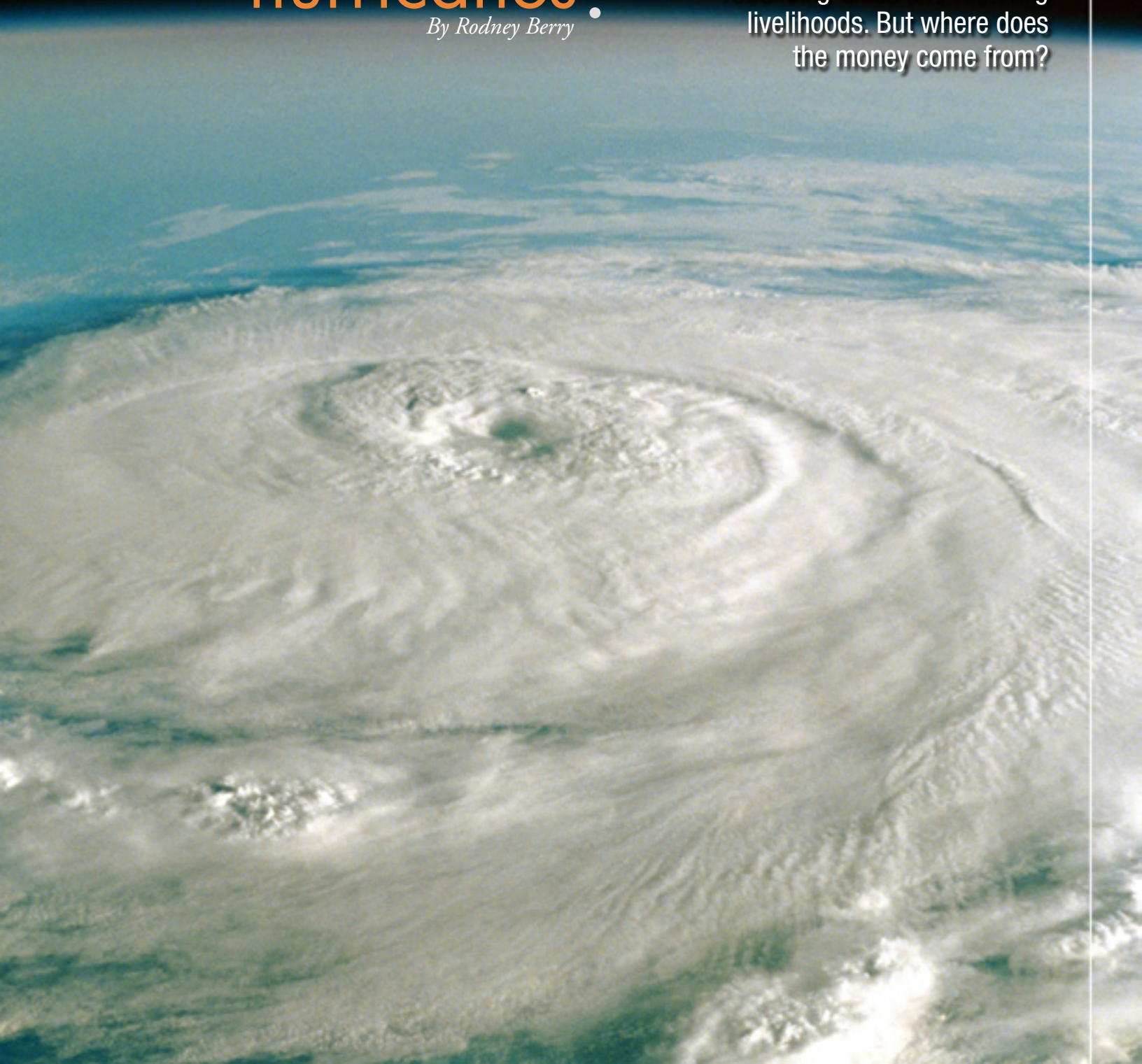
The full report is available on the NORED website:
www.nored.us



HOW should we pay for the hurricanes?

By Rodney Berry

After the Gulf Coast received direct hits from three major hurricanes within two months, the government was hit with the daunting task of rebuilding cities and restoring livelihoods. But where does the money come from?





NEW ORLEANS (Aug. 29, 2005) - Flooded roadways can be seen as the Coast Guard conducts initial Hurricane Katrina damage assessment. U.S. Coast Guard photograph by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Niemi

"There's so much opportunity here to go back into the budget and extract some savings to help pay for this hurricane relief that I look at it as an opportunity for the Congress to get back to its roots of being fiscally sound and conservative. Maybe something good can come from this hurricane."

*"Fox News Sunday" Interview
Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina)
U.S. Senate*

Framing the Issue

Storm after storm

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the central Gulf Coast near New Orleans with 175 mile per hour winds and torrential rains. Storm surges breached the Lake Pontchartrain levee, flooding a major American city.

More than a million people were displaced, creating an economic and humanitarian crisis not seen since the Great Depression. Five million people were without power. The city's infrastructure, public safety and essential services were in a state of disarray. Business districts and neighborhoods were devastated and uninhabitable. To date, there have been 1,277 fatalities; more are expected.

On Sept. 24, Hurricane Rita delivered a second punch, damaging drilling rigs, flooding refineries and disrupting vital oil and gas facilities in south Texas and Louisiana. To replenish supplies, President Bush released crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and eased environmental standards to expedite production.

Then on Oct. 24, Hurricane Wilma slashed through south Florida, with hurricane-force winds resulting in flooding from Naples to Miami.



Pass Christian, Ms., October 4, 2005 -- Aerial photo shows the only surviving home in the area that was completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Foundations are all that remain of most of the neighboring homes. John Fleck/FEMA

Unprecedented devastation

Hurricane Katrina's 90,000 square mile swath through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama made it the most costly natural disaster in U.S. history. The estimated cost to assist people with emergency needs, relocate displaced persons, clean up damage, rebuild a major city and coastal areas, and bring businesses and jobs back to the region: \$200 billion.

Damage estimates from Hurricane Rita are \$8 billion and up to \$9 billion for Hurricane Wilma.

These costs are beyond the capability of the state and local governments of the region, whose tax base and economies have been ravaged by the storms. Private insurance will absorb some of the burden, but much of the damage and rebuilding challenge is beyond the role and scope of insurance coverage. Responding to these needs is a test of our national character. Philanthropy and volunteerism have been impressive amid a bureaucratic emergency response fraught with problems. President Bush and congressional leaders assured the region that the federal government will do "whatever it takes" to complete the task.

Framing the Issue: How should we pay for the hurricanes?

OPTIONS: WHERE CAN THE MONEY COME FROM?

Where can the money come from?

The problem is this: Our federal government was deep in hock *before* Katrina, Rita or Wilma wreaked havoc along these coastal areas. The White House Office of Management and Budget projected a \$333 billion deficit for fiscal 2005, \$341 billion for fiscal 2006. Bring on a war in Iraq, homeland security pressures following 9-11, an incipient Medicare prescription drug program, and a federal treasury undermined by tax cuts, and it's no wonder that citizens question how our federal government can continue to spend beyond its means.

How should our federal government respond to this challenge? How can we be both compassionate and fiscally responsible? We examine five ways to pay for this reconstruction:

- Spend Less in Iraq
- Delay, Reduce or Cancel Tax Cuts
- Cut Domestic Spending
- Levy a Special Tax
- Allow the Economy to Absorb the Cost

1. SPEND LESS IN IRAQ

The non-partisan Institute for Policy Studies recently reported the total cost of the Iraq War to date at \$151 billion. Military operations in Iraq run an estimated \$4 billion to \$5 billion per month.

More than 2,000 U.S. soldiers have been killed in the war and more than 15,000 have been wounded. Approximately 30,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in the war.

Heavy deployment of National Guard troops in Iraq has diluted security resources at home. Forty-four percent of the nation's police forces have lost personnel through deployment to Iraq; 75,000 firefighters were lost to deployment in the first few months of the war alone.

A recent NBC/WSJ poll found that 45 percent of Americans would like to see the Gulf Coast reconstruction paid by reducing spending in Iraq.

THOSE WHO FAVOR THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- It is time for the Iraqi people and army to take responsibility for their security.
- We should have learned from Vietnam that we cannot impose our ways on another culture.
- The troops who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq died honorably, but that does not mean we should continue losing more troops to this ill-conceived war.
- Whether we scale back our presence, leave soon or many years from now, an Iraq civil war is inevitable as factions fight over territories and oil reserves.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We have too much invested in helping Iraq establish a democracy. We can't cut and run. Too many lives have been lost. Our troops will have died in vain if we leave now.
- The cost of the war is well worth the benefit of having a stabilizing presence in such a vital region.
- Despite threats and intimidation, despite suicide bombers and insurgents, the Iraqi people have risked their lives to participate in elections, craft a constitution and vote to adopt it. The Iraqi people are demonstrating that they yearn for peace and freedom. We should support them by not reducing our presence or funding.
- The Iraqi military is not ready to assume sole responsibility for social order. It will take time to recruit and train the Iraqi army and security personnel.

2. DELAY, REDUCE OR CANCEL TAX CUTS

Three months before 9-11, the Bush administration persuaded enough Democratic senators to join them in adopting tax cuts that would decrease federal tax revenues by \$1.35 trillion through 2010. These cuts were said to represent half of the projected surplus – a surplus, however, that was projected prior to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, prior to homeland security initiatives, prior to the Iraq War, prior to Medicare's new prescription drug benefits.

The surplus did not materialize. A year later there was a \$158 billion deficit; the following year, a \$378 billion deficit. Thirteen trillion dollars had been added to the federal government's long-term obligations.

Despite additional defense and homeland security costs the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office attributed the increasing deficits to tax cuts. Consequently, the federal government has less money to work with than it had under the previous eight presidents.

From 2001 through 2010, citizens with incomes in the top one percent (average income of \$1.5 million in 2010) will receive 52 percent of the tax cuts (half a trillion dollars).

In addition to these cuts, the Bush administration supports eliminating the estate tax and making the 2001 through 2010 tax cuts permanent. This would reduce federal revenues on a permanent basis by 2.5 percent of gross national product (GNP) – a decline larger than the shortfalls in Medicare and Social Security for the next 75 years combined.

THOSE WHO FAVOR THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Our nation's top one percent of income earners, who benefit the most from the recent and planned tax cuts, can easily give up this windfall in order to help cover the cost of this national crisis.
- Supply side "trickle down" economics was a Reagan era experiment that did not work. It is irresponsible to reduce government revenues through tax cuts to the point where essential services are jeopardized.
- The inept response of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to the crisis in New Orleans is a reflection of under-funded federal agencies.
- The Bush administration squandered the surplus it inherited. We must cancel the planned tax cuts to get us back on track toward a balanced budget.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- These tax cuts were long overdue. High taxes strangle economic growth. It is high time we return more of the people's money to them.
- The wealthy pay most of the taxes; it is only appropriate that they benefit the most from tax cuts.
- When more money is moved out of government and into the private sector, it frees up funds for capital investment, economic growth, and jobs. We can grow our way out of the current deficits.
- The Bush tax cuts received bi-partisan support. We need to give the initiative time to work its magic in the marketplace.

Framing the Issue: How should we pay for the hurricanes?

OPTIONS: WHERE CAN THE MONEY COME FROM?

3. CUT DOMESTIC SPENDING

On the heels of comments by House Majority Leader Tom Delay that there is not a great deal of fat to cut from the federal budget, the Republican Study Committee released a 23-page report recommending 100 specific budget offsets that total nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years. By reducing federal spending, more funds would be available to use for reconstruction of hurricane-damaged areas and other natural disasters.

In an Oct. 7 op-ed chart, *The New York Times* listed \$125 billion in savings that could be cut from defense, Medicare and prescription drugs, space exploration, corporate welfare, poorly directed programs, and “pork” from the transportation and other budgets.

A consensus on the need to cut federal spending does not mean there would be a consensus on which programs or agencies would be cut: Republicans (and the Bush administration) tend to support cuts in social programs, health services, and education; Democrats tend to favor cuts in defense, corporate subsidies, and selected “pork” projects.

At the same time, even conservative columnist Cal Thomas encourages cuts that target the rich and ineffective, wasteful government programs over cuts in programs that serve the poor.



New Orleans, LA, October 9, 2005 - This souvenir shop is open for business in New Orleans despite the sidewalk being blocked by crushed vehicles and debris leftover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Robert Kaufmann/FEMA

THOSE WHO FAVOR THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Spending is out of control.
- The 1988 federal highway bill included 150 “pork” projects; the 2005 highway bill included 6,000 “pork” projects.
- The 2005 highway bill had a \$286 billion price tag and included \$233 million for an Alaskan bridge to reach a community of 50 people.
- Since 2001, federal spending has increased 33 percent, 20 percent in non-defense spending.
- Spending has more than doubled during the Bush administration. President Bush has never vetoed a spending bill.
- Many federal programs are ill-conceived. For example, the massive Medicare entitlement expansion will subsidize wealthy and middle class retirees, three-quarters of whom already have prescription drug coverage.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- These federal programs are important. Many projects labeled as “pork” are important community development projects that will induce investment and create jobs in depressed areas.
- Beyond popular entitlements (e.g., Medicare, Social Security) and untouchables (interest on the debt, defense, homeland security), the budget includes \$500 billion in discretionary funds. Congress would have to cut 40 percent of everything that’s left to pay for Katrina alone.
- Significant cuts in federal programs could jeopardize the re-election of congresspeople whose constituents benefit from these funds.
- Owensboro has seldom received its fair share of federal funds, and federal cuts could threaten Owensboro’s \$40 million riverfront improvement.
- The public should be wary of administration proposals to cut spending because it will likely target Medicaid, food stamps, temporary assistance to needy families, across the board cuts to housing, job training, or energy assistance – programs that serve the poor and most vulnerable.

4. LEVY A SPECIAL TAX

In 1968, President Johnson asked Congress to enact a one-year 10 percent income tax surcharge to help pay for the cost of the Vietnam War. A space was designated for citizens to add the surcharge at the bottom of their tax return.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, a one-time 10 percent income tax surcharge would generate \$127 billion – more than half of President Bush’s program to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

The New York Times projects that a progressive income surtax of up to \$50 per month for five years would produce \$25 billion.

THOSE WHO FAVOR THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- A surtax could be imposed for one year only, or for a brief designated period.
- A surtax would promote the notion that everyone needs to sacrifice in time of need. It would unify the nation and foster patriotism.
- With billions raised through a surtax, it will be easier to come up with the balance through budget cuts.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- This is no time to raise taxes; it could tip the economy into recession.
- The best thing we can do for the areas damaged by hurricanes is to bring back private investment to the region. To do that, we need to cut taxes even more, or make the tax cuts permanent, even though it would increase the deficit in the short-term.
- If a surtax is a flat tax, it would affect the poor more harshly than higher income taxpayers.

Framing the Issue

OPTIONS: WHERE CAN THE MONEY COME FROM?

5. ALLOW THE ECONOMY TO ABSORB THE COST

To the cynic's dismay, our economy is chugging right along, in a fourth year of expansion, with an unemployment rate of only 5.1 percent. In July, the House Office of Management and Budget projected that the deficit would decline from \$412 billion in 2004 to \$333 billion in 2005, a sign to some that President Bush's tax relief plan and pro-growth policies are working.

Federal spending is essentially score keeping. The issue is not how we pay for the damages and reconstruction caused by the hurricanes, but the economic ramifications of government spending and tax increases on inflation, output, growth, employment, etc.

THOSE WHO FAVOR THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Our \$12 trillion economy can absorb these costs: A \$200 billion increase in the deficit is less than two percent of the Gross Domestic Product and is a one-time expense.
- Deficits are only too large if the private sector can no longer get the capital and labor it needs, which could precipitate an inflationary surge.
- The federal government cannot write huge checks every time there is a natural disaster. Such a practice takes away the incentive to purchase insurance and take other prudent safety measures.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Economic theories aside, we should use common sense and live within our means.
- The federal government deficit will reach \$500 billion by 2006 or 2007. If we do nothing or don't change course, we will pass along this debt to our children and grandchildren.
- If we do not increase taxes or cut spending to pay for these disasters, we will have to borrow the funds from Asian banks and foreign investors.

"The costs we're talking about related to Katrina are going to have a short-term impact on the deficit. They're one-time costs. But we have to believe we can continue to meet the president's commitment to halve the deficit by 2009."

Scott McClellan
White House Spokesman



Port Arthur, TX, September 25, 2005 -- Businesses and private homes were heavily damaged by the storm. Port Arthur was hit hard by Hurricane Rita. Photo by Ed Edahl/FEMA



Port Sulpher, LA., October 18, 2005 -- Clean up efforts are proceeding slowly in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. The remains of a house and car are waiting to be removed. Patsy Lynch/FEMA

How should we pay for the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast?

Reduce spending in Iraq	45 percent
Repeal tax cuts	27 percent
Cut federal spending	12 percent
Other/Undecided	16 percent

Source: NBC/WSJ poll



Long Beach, Miss., October 30, 2005 -- A lone, surviving home stands alone in Long Beach, Miss. Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage all along the Mississippi gulf coast. FEMA/Mark Wolfe

"I can't go any further for the war or Katrina or anything else down the road without making real cuts to show some semblance of living within our means. There comes a day of reckoning and I think the day of reckoning is starting to come to Congress now."

*Darrell Issa (R-California)
U.S. House of Representatives*

Framing the Issue

FOR MORE INFORMATION/GET INVOLVED

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

www.cbpp.org

Citizens for Tax Justice

www.ctj.org

Common Cause

www.commoncause.org

Congressional Budget Office

www.cbo.gov/publications/collections/hurricanes.cfm

The Heritage Foundation

www.heritage.org

People for a Responsible Budget

www.childrenshomesociety.org

SHARE YOUR VIEWS

President George W. Bush

www.whitehouse.gov

Senator Jim Bunning

<http://bunning.senate.gov>

Senator Mitch McConnell

<http://mccconnell.senate.gov>

Representative Ron Lewis

www.house.gov/ronlewis

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www.thepetitionsite.com

Peace, justice & the courts

By Jay Wethington, Commonwealth Attorney

Note: The following speech was delivered on Sept. 10, 2005, at the annual meeting of the Owensboro-Daviess County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Walker, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. (Thank you for the introduction)

I am honored and humbled to be before you tonight.

I am humbled because of the rich past and traditions and the wonderful legacy of the NAACP.

The NAACP has earned the right to be the standard-bearer or the voice for justice and equality in this nation. . . in this state. . . and in this community.

I am encouraged by this gathering tonight as we celebrate this noble organization.

As we sit here tonight I think of the tremendous struggle our nation is enduring to establish peace and justice in Iraq. . . trying to establish a constitution there, trying to build a system of justice over there. And when I saw the travesty unfolding in Louisiana and Mississippi last week I wonder why we are expending the effort and resources over there to teach something we haven't learned over here.

When I see some national media showing a white family taking merchandise out of a store and labeling them "survivors" and then in the next sound bite show a black teenager, a child, doing the same thing and label him a "looter". . . I am outraged . . . Outraged at the injustice. I suspect that in the coming months we will hear and see more about that from Louisiana.

But before I tell you about what the struggle for peace and justice means to me, I think you are entitled to know a little more about me and my experience and education. When I thought about coming before you tonight I asked myself why I wanted to do this. . . I knew it might get a little hot under these lights for a prosecutor. But then I thought that because I am your chief prosecutor you are entitled to know what I think about social justice and about my experience.

I remember, when I was a child, some of the lessons I learned about race and social justice. Part of our family was a black woman who was raised in my father's home with him and his family. She came to help my mother with seven children and I gradually realized that she was part of our family longer than I was. And that she was empowered to discipline us and punish us and that we had better listen to her. And I learned that she loved us as part of her own and we loved her as part of us.

**...when we went to
school we, and they, were
ridiculed because we
had a black family
living with us.**

In our church community a black family lost their home in a fire and some of them came to stay with us for several weeks. And when we went to school we, and they, were ridiculed because we had a black family living with us. But when my sisters and I talked about this at home we were taught that our classmates were wrong and that we were better than that.

And I remember in April 1968 when Martin Luther King was killed it was a time of mourning in our house and not in the homes of some of the people we knew.

I remember and saw people from Louisville drive down to Judge Gordon's



Freedom
opportunity
Equality

Peace, justice and the courts

house in protest. . . and that I was taught that he was a good and courageous man and a judge. . . and a lawyer.

And when Ray Charles sang "Georgia On My Mind" on the floor of the Georgia legislature, I was there on the floor in Atlanta. And I have met and had lunch with Andrew Young.

Now I tell you these things because of what I am about to tell you. Because you should know these things because of what I am going to tell you . . . about my job.

In a perfect world envisioned by Plato and others race and color would not be a factor. But in my world it is a factor . . . often. . . sometimes on a daily basis.

I prosecute crimes where race is a factor . . .

Race is a factor in jury selection.

Race is a factor in what a jury does.

Race is a factor in what I recommend.

I can't tell you about the racial disparity in punishment in Jefferson County that has recently been the subject of the news in the *Courier Journal* I don't know about that. I have no doubt that it is a problem there but I don't know about the facts in the Jefferson County judicial system.

I do know the details and facts about what I deal with and my office. In my office, as a policy, race is not a factor unless it is forced upon us, unless it must be.

I can tell you that when young black men are motivated and baited to violence because of racial slurs there will be consequences for that violence . . . but its going to be mitigated because of racism.

When I look at a young white man from a good home, middle class...good education who is before us for a recommendation for dealing drugs because he wants to make some money or get his friends high and then, I look at a young black man, with less opportunity for a job, with no role model in the home and the knowledge I have that in this community there are no jobs, no scholarships . . . because for some young black men in this town dealing drugs is the only immediate way to make money that they have . . . race is a factor in what I recommend. And sometimes the criminal process is a teaching opportunity.

I can tell you that the judges I appear before are good, honorable and compassionate men. And NOT racially motivated.

And that they are sometimes surprised by my recommendations and they question them sometimes. But they know that almost always . . . almost always I know more about the facts than they do. I know more of the facts. They also know that I recognize a duty to fairness and that I know that are likewise motivated and inspired to be fair.

You should know that in some cases, no matter what a prosecutor does . . . Some people are not going to be happy. I know this everyday. But I also know that what happens in the courtroom is watched, as it should be . . . not by the media, they do a fine job . . . but by some members of the public . . . but not enough. It used to be that the courtroom drama was the source of entertainment for people and they used to be full. But not anymore. Sometime we finally pick a jury the jury are the only people in the courtroom other than the parties. I see white families in the courtroom more than I see black families . . . and it makes a difference sometimes to those judges who may change their minds about sentencing if they see family support. Too often there is no one there but the defendant.

You should also realize that I know a jury can be racially motivated to be biased . . . both ways.

I can only imagine what it would be like to be a white man ar-

rested by a black police officer . . . taken before a black judge . . . tried by a black prosecutor . . . before an all black jury . . . and represented by a black lawyer. I can only imagine. But what I am telling you and what I want you to understand from my comments to you tonight is that I do imagine it . . . I think about it.

You should know that I know sometimes cases must go to trial. Sometimes only a jury should say not guilty. That sometimes a community needs to hear a jury say not guilty. Or that sometimes a grand jury needs to say there is no more threat of prosecution. Sometimes a community needs to hear guilty.

You should know that I know the struggle for social justice is not just about what a jury says but how a prosecutor behaves and responds. And that sometimes a community gets the justice it deserves.

You should know that I know a jury can be wrong and that a case should not go to a jury at all. You should know that I know that sometimes the racial motivations of some people should not be played out in front of a jury . . . or the newspaper. They don't deserve the attention they seek.

These are hard and sometimes difficult decisions and sometimes the jury gets it wrong and sometimes I get it wrong. And sometimes the court does.

Justice isn't always what you think it should be. But the taste of justice, real justice, in the courts is sweet when everybody there knows the right thing was done. It is sweet cool water and sometimes crystal clear.

Striving for justice, everyday, is difficult. Sometimes a community gets the justice it deserves, but the struggle is everyday. It can be a challenge. For some people in this

room I don't have to tell you that . . . that justice is a daily struggle . . . some of you live it everyday. Some are doing it now.

Perfect justice, like perfect peace, has to be sought. It's not going to be given to us. We have to work for it. For people like me, others in the court system and law enforcement and yes, some defense attorneys, it is a privilege to work in this arena. A privilege and an awesome responsibility. And if you take on this responsibility you should, as I do, ask yourself if you are doing the right thing . . . everyday.

Some months ago one of our sons, Rex Chapman, said on national television that he remembers growing up in a racist environment. Many people were angry that he said it. Truthfully, many people were embarrassed . . . they should have been. I was glad that he said it because it made people think. And if you think about it you might be inspired to do something about it. You might find the courage it took for Thurgood Marshall, Andrew Young, Rosa Parks . . . Dr. King. And although he's not in the same league as those I just mentioned, what he said took courage as well.

And so when I think about my contribution to you tonight . . . with these words I know it's not enough. And so tonight I tender my application to you for a membership to commemorate its work. Not just a membership for this year but for a life membership . . . because the struggle for peace and justice, as you know, is a lifetime struggle. When I think about the tragedy in New Orleans I want my money to go to the NAACP because the work of the NAACP is far from over in Louisiana. And I would be proud to be a member of the NAACP. Thank you. ■



Citizens Speak... LEADERS RESPOND

Majority favor smoking restrictions



By more than two-to-one, Daviess County voters support a local ordinance that would restrict smoking in public places.

An Aug. 2005 random sample telephone survey of 401 Daviess County registered voters was conducted by Opinion Research Associates, Inc. of Little Rock, Arkansas. The survey was paid for by the American Cancer Society on behalf of O-DC Smoke Free, a group of local citizens supporting the ordinance.

Forty-nine percent of those surveyed were Democrats, 25 percent Republican, and 13 percent Independent. (The others identified themselves as Independent-Democrat or Independent-Republican or there was no response.)

Seventy-four percent of those surveyed were non-smokers, 10 percent smoke every day, and eight percent smoke some days.

Fifty-three percent of those surveyed were women, 47 percent were men.

The margin of error is plus or minus five percentage points.

■ 65 percent of respondents favor a city ordinance that would make all public buildings, workplaces, restaurants and bars smoke free.

■ 50 percent strongly favor the ordinance.

■ 15 percent somewhat favor the ordinance.

■ 30 percent oppose the ordinance

■ 20 percent strongly oppose the ordinance

■ 10 percent somewhat oppose the ordinance

■ 5 percent have no opinion.

On a parallel track, O-DC Smoke Free, a citizens group promoting the ordinances, has been sharing recent research on the dangers of second-hand smoke. Citizens Health Care Advocates distributed similar information through email alerts and newspaper advertisements.

Opposition to the proposed ordinances may be substantial but does not appear to be organized.

* * *

Officials considering ordinances

In recent weeks, several drafts of city, county and city-county ordinances to restrict smoking in public places have been proposed, circulated and debated, sparking letters to the editor, editorials and presentations to community groups.

At press time, the countywide ordinance (which would include Owensboro) under consideration included the following:

- No smoking in any building allowing public access to people under 18 years of age or younger.
- No provision for workplace restrictions unless it employs people 18 years or younger or has an area for public access to those 18 or under.
- First offense: \$50. Second offense and after: \$100. Possible stiffer penalties for persistent offenders.
- Fines apply to employers as well as individuals caught smoking in restricted areas.

At press time, the tentative schedule was as follows:

December 1, 2005

Courthouse

4:00 p.m.

Daviess County Fiscal Court First Reading

December 15, 2005

Courthouse

4:00 p.m.

Daviess County Fiscal Court Second Reading



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER Public AGENDA

Meetings, hearings, and forums open to the public. Please contact us if your organization would like its events listed by calling 685-2652 or sending an email to info@plfo.org. (Meetings are subject to change.)

Important Upcoming Public Meetings

NOVEMBER

2 Government Unification Task Force
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Green River Area Development District

3 Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce
Rooster Booster Breakfast
7:30 a.m.
Guest speaker: Ronny Pryor, Chamber of Commerce Lobbyist
Executive Inn

10 Citizens Health Care Advocates
5:30 p.m.
Guest speaker: Garrett Adams, M.D., M.P.H.,
Physicians for a National Health Program
Green River District Health Department
Bedford Walker Community Room

PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County
5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Signature Projects Final Design Forum
Special guest: Morgan C., McIlwain,
ASLA, landscape architect
Wendell Foster Campus, Young Meeting House
815 Triplett Street

16 Dangers of Smoking Forum
Co-sponsored by Get Healthy Kentucky! and Kentucky Department for Public Health's Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
RiverPark Center, Experimental Theatre
To register online: <http://apps.chfs.ky.gov/TBCRegApp/Welcome.aspx>
For information call: (502) 564-6786

16 Government Unification Task Force
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Green River Area Development District

17 PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County
5:00 p.m.
Annual Meeting
Guest speaker: David Adkisson,
President & CEO, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Home Builders Association of Owensboro
3515 Wathens Crossing

21 Coalition for the Poor
12:00 p.m.
First Christian Church

30 Government Unification Task Force
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Green River Area Development District

DECEMBER

1 Goodfellows Club
"Community Soup Day for Kids"
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Third Baptist Church, Fireside Room

8 PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Soup Day for Kids
Settle Memorial United Methodist Church

14 Government Unification Task Force
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Green River Area Development District

Regularly Scheduled Public Meetings

Meeting Dates and Times Subject to Change

Citizens Health Care Advocates
Second Thursday each month
5:30 p.m.
GRDHD, Bedford-Walker Community Room

Daviess County Board of Education
Third Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
1622 Southeastern Parkway

Daviess County Fiscal Court
First and Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
Daviess County Courthouse

Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce "Rooster Booster" Breakfast
First Thursday each month
7:30 a.m.
Executive Inn

Green River Health Council
Second Tuesday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
10:00 a.m.
GRADD

continued on pg. 21

The TRACKER

DATA OF INTEREST



Compiled by
Chad M. Gesser

POVERTY, SMOKING AND HEALTH

- Kentucky is one of the 10 poorest states in the United States.
- Rates of smoking are highest in states with higher poverty.
- Medicaid recipients have approximately 50 percent greater smoking prevalence than the overall U.S. population. In 2002, Kentucky was one of 15 states which did not include medication coverage for tobacco dependence treatment under Medicaid.
- In 2004, Kentucky had the highest adult smoking rate in the country at 28 percent.
- The local adult smoking rate (18 and older) is 26 percent. The local youth smoking rate (8th to 12th graders) is 24 percent.
- From 2001 to 2003, 56 percent of adults in Owensboro-Daviess County tried to quit smoking. The state average was 48 percent.
- In 2004, 52 percent of local manufacturers offered smoking cessation programs to their employees. The state average was 48 percent.
- According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, from 1997 to 2001, cigarette smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke resulted in approximately 438,000 premature deaths in the United States, 5.5 million total years of potential life lost, and \$92 billion of annual losses in worker productivity.
- In 2003, 64 percent of local schools banned smoking on school grounds. The state average was 42 percent.
- In 2003, 57 percent of local restaurants were smoke free. The state average was 45 percent.
- In 2002, Kentucky had the fifth highest age-adjusted death rate in the United States. Citizens in 45 other states live healthier and longer than Kentuckians.
- The four leading indicators of death in the Kentucky are 1) heart disease; 2) cancer; 3) stroke; and 4) chronic lower respiratory disease.
- Cigarette smoking is the single most common preventable cause of death for the four leading indicators of death.

This Index and other items of interest can be found at The Owensboro Blog:
<http://owensboro.blogspot.com>

Public AGENDA, cont.

Neighborhood Alliance Meetings

Apollo Area Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Apollo Heights Baptist Church.

Audubon Bon Harbor Area Alliance

Second Monday each month
6:30 p.m.
Audubon Church of the Nazarene

Dogwood Azalea Neighborhood Alliance

Third Thursday each month
5:30 p.m.
Daviness County Public Library

Dugan Best Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
6:00 p.m.
Dugan Best Recreation Center

Hillcrest Area Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
6:30 p.m.
Daviness County High School Media Center

Midtown East Neighborhood Alliance

First Thursday each month
5:00 p.m.
Buena Vista Baptist Church

Northwest Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Foust Elementary School Media Center

Old Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Wendell Foster Center Administration Building Boardroom

Seven Hills Neighborhood Alliance

First Thursday each month
7:00 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church

Shifley-York Neighborhood Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Lewis Lane Baptist Church

Southeast Alliance

Second Thursday each month
6:30 p.m.
Newton Parrish Elementary School

Wesleyan-Shawnee Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
6 p.m.
Kentucky Wesleyan College, Winchester Center

Owensboro Board of Education

Fourth Thursday each month
4:30 p.m.
Boardroom

Owensboro City Commission

First and Third Tuesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport

Third Monday of each month
4:30 p.m.
Airport terminal building conference room

Owensboro Historic Preservation Board & Downtown Design Review Commission

Fourth Wednesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Housing Authority

Fourth Thursday each month
11:30 a.m.
2161 E. 19th St.

Owensboro Metropolitan Board of Adjustment

First Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission

Second Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Riverport Authority

Fourth Friday each month
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road

Owensboro Utility Commission

Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
2070 Tamarack Rd., Third floor board room

Preservation Alliance of Owensboro-Daviess County, Inc.

First Friday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
12:00 p.m.
Campbell Club

RWRA

Third Monday each month (except January, Fourth Monday)
3:30 p.m.
RWRA, 1722 Pleasant Valley Road

Tobacco Control Coalition

Fourth Wednesday each month
11:30 a.m.
GRDHD

Tourism & Convention Bureau

Third Thursday each month
7:45 a.m.
215 E. Second St.

Making a Difference

IDEAS "FROM THE PEOPLE" ARE CHANGING BEHAVIORS

The Community Summit on Healthy Lifestyles, coordinated by Healthy Horizons in September 2003, was a particularly unique and effective "bottoms-up" initiative to promote and facilitate healthier behaviors.

During the summit, a diverse group of several hundred participants brainstormed ways in which smoking cessation, improved nutrition, and active lifestyles could be promoted more effectively in homes and neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, civic organizations, churches, and senior citizen facilities.

"Action Teams" were organized subsequently to implement the suggestions and develop others. Some of the more creative and successful ideas will be celebrated at a community gathering on December 5 (11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.) at the HealthPark. Dr. J. Edward Hill, President of the American Medical Association, will be the guest speaker.

CITIZENS EXAMINE DENTAL PROBLEMS

Concerned citizens and caregivers gathered recently to share stories about the large number of children in our community who receive little or no dental care. Despite the efforts of some generous volunteer dentists and hygienists, screenings at schools, sealant programs, and the Christian Dental Clinic, many children are not receiving the care they need. Social workers and school nurses are seeing multiple cavities, gum disease, premature extractions, and related health problems that result from poor dental hygiene.

Few low- and moderate-income families are enrolled in dental insurance programs, and few employers offer dental insurance as a benefit. Consequently, an increasing number of children do not see a dentist until conditions are serious.

Low Medicaid reimbursements and the demands of private practice discourage dentists from participating in social outreach efforts. Suggestions that emerged from the meeting: a stepped up dentist volunteer recruitment effort, an expansion of the DC-CAP program to include dental care, or the addition of a dental clinic in the new Daviess County Health Center.

It was also suggested that if the health department could provide space for a dental clinic in its new building, and if private donors and/or grant funds were used to equip the clinic, a strong case could be made to the local board of health to increase the county health tax to cover staff and operating costs.

LAPLAZA VOLUNTEERS ASSIST HURRICANE VICTIMS

Several teams of volunteers from Owensboro assisted in relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. LaPlaza volunteers manned a mobile clinic that served the Plaquemines Parish area of New Orleans where the medical infrastructure had been destroyed. They served hundreds of patients, provided translation services, medical care, clerical assistance, direct assistance (children's needs, medications, lodging, etc.). But most of all, they focused on lifting the spirits of so many who had lost everything.

These relief efforts were made possible in large part by the generous support of Owensboro-Daviess County residents. We salute all the contributors, Sister Lorraine Lauter and other LaPlaza leaders for their compassionate responsiveness.

ASSET BUILDING COALITION GEARS UP FOR TAX SEASON

The Owensboro-Daviess County Asset Building Coalition, a collaborative effort of 30 nonprofit organizations, is dedicated to improving the financial conditions and prospects of local low and moderate income individuals and families. The coalition is currently recruiting volunteer tax preparers to assist individuals in receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit when they qualify. An estimated 20 percent of eligible workers in Daviess County do not apply. Local families may be losing as much as \$2.0 million annually.

The coalition also seeks to improve financial literacy and financial decision-making during a time of prevalent predatory lenders. These skills are increasingly important for the 25 percent of all workers who earn \$8.75 or less per hour.



Citizen Action UPDATE

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

To submit updates on citizen action: 685-2652 or info@plfo.org.

Bring Back Baseball Committee

Bruce Brubaker, chair

bbrubaker@champion-ford.com

- Awaiting completion of a feasibility study (included in a study of a downtown arena); contributed \$10,000 toward the study

The Citizens Committee on Education

Marianne Smith Edge, co-chair

msedge@smithedge.com

Forrest Roberts, co-chair

robrook@adelphia.net

- Following up on recommendations to a strategic higher education study it released in September
- Developing "The Learning Community" program to instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of community life
- Subcommittees examining a report on high achieving high schools and drop-out rates, and developing a parental involvement pamphlet

Citizens Health Care Advocates

Dale Taylor, chair

dalet@www.com

Meetings: Second Thursday of each month, 5:30 p.m., Green River District Health Department

- Sharing information and encouraging citizen action connected with a local ordinance to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke
- Continuing monthly programs on relevant topics and issues
- Tracking "Five Fields of Focus" for 2005:
 - access to health care
 - healthy lifestyles
 - governmental affairs
 - health care costs
 - organizational development
- CHCA now has 115 members and 550 attendees and participants at meetings, which are broadcast on OCTV

Coalition for the Poor

Nancy Keeton, Keith Sanders, and Sharon Sharp (Steering Committee)

c/o Public Life Foundation, 401 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY 42301 (685-2652)

Next Meeting: Nov. 21, noon, First Christian Church

- Building a network of citizens concerned about the plight of the poor
- Sharing information and concerns regarding the impact of government social program cuts on the poor
- Exploring leadership development programs that empower the poor

Goodfellows Club

Bruce Kunze, president

bkunze1@aol.com

- Planning community "Soup Day" for kids and promoting "soup days" at local workplaces
- Participated in recent meeting on youth dental needs
- Planning 2005 "Roll Call" campaign (\$100,000 goal)
- Annually provides more than 1,000 children with winter coats, shoes, clothing and emergency assistance

Owensboro Area World Affairs Council

Stephanie Curran, president

curranp@bellsouth.net

Board meetings: Fourth Thursday, 7:00 a.m., Kentucky Wesleyan College

- Presented Morton Holbrook III, U. S. State Department: "The European Union: Does it Matter?"
- Presented humanitarian Tamara Quinn, founder of the Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq
- Presented Stephen Cohen, author and commentator: "The Real Danger in Russia."
- Planning the following programs in 2006:
 - Patterson School of Diplomacy Director John Stempel
 - International election consultant George Russell (February 7).
 - Syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts

Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance

Tracy Marksberry, coordinator

marksbertm@owensboro.org

- Completing a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) to develop leadership skills at the grass roots neighborhood level
- Administering projects to inform and involve citizens and improve neighborhoods

PRIDE

Susie Tyler, president

grand.view@adelphia.net

- Promoting a master plan for the community entrances from the Natcher Bridge and West Parrish Avenue from the airport
- Committees active in areas of beautification, public projects, architecture and more

Unity Coalition

Liz Seibert, project manager

liz.seibert@plfo.org

- Planning 2006 series of programs on racial-ethnic issues

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

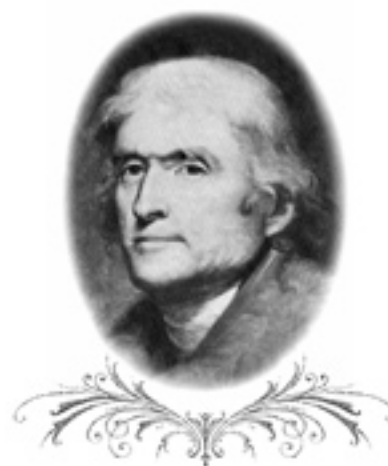
The *Public Life Advocate*, published bi-monthly, is committed to be a trusted resource of information and analysis of public concerns and community issues. The *Advocate* is a community-driven publication, grounded in a commitment to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, Inc. is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c) operating foundation (not a grant-making entity) founded in 1996 by John and Marjorie Hager. Mr. Hager is the former owner, editor, and publisher of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

The foundation fosters broad, meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy. We believe that open, accessible, and trustful institutions are essential to an enlightened and engaged citizenry and the democratic process.

Foundation activities are driven by the importance that people attach to issues. We are committed to the people's agenda. To assist citizens in solving problems and seizing opportunities, we facilitate a process of information > deliberation > action.



*"I knew of no safe
depository of the ultimate
powers of society but the
people themselves; and if
we think them not
enlightened enough to
exercise their control with
a wholesome discretion,
the remedy is not to take
it from them, but to inform
their discretion by education."*

Thomas Jefferson